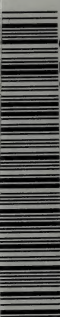


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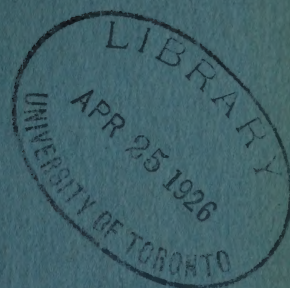
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

BY

PAUL NISSLEY LANDIS

A.B., Franklin and Marshall College, 1913

A.M., Franklin and Marshall College, 1915



ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIRE-
MENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN ENGLISH IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
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In the course of its development during the nineteenth century the English historical novel dealing with the period 1640-1688 assumed many forms, generally the result of changing tastes and habits of thought on the part of the public. Characteristically, as will be seen, the third quarter of the century brought forth the psychological treatment of the historical novel.

One of the chief results of the social and political conditions of the nineteenth century was the novel of purpose, or better perhaps, the development of serious purpose in the novel. Notwithstanding the long argument as to whether fiction has for its object the amusement, in the broad sense, or the instruction of its readers, the two aims have always been more or less united. It is to novels primarily concerned with the latter end that the term "novel of purpose" is generally applied. The moral purpose of Defoe and Richardson was openly and vociferously proclaimed, and the same characteristic was only a little less emphatically present in the work of Fielding. Romance, which concerns itself almost entirely with the story, was for the most part free from any purpose other than entertainment, though even Mrs. Radcliffe, high-priestess of the Gothic, prided herself on the moral tone of her novels. Scott, it will be remembered, had little faith in the moral influence of fiction, but he did hope that his novels might lead unstudious dilettantes to the reading of serious history, and he took comfort on his death-bed in the thought that he had written nothing which might corrupt any reader. There can, however, be little question but that it was this want of serious purpose which, despite the solid value of *The Waverley Novels*, kept romance in disrepute with a great body of readers.

Following Scott, during the first half of the century, many influences combined to broaden the scope of the novel. Though they left many unconverted, *The Waverley Novels* did more than any other works of fiction to enlarge the fiction reading public in all circles.¹ This spread of fiction was aided in no small measure by

¹Abel Chevalley: *Le Roman Anglais De Notre Temps*, p. 24 "(Le roman anglais) doit aux auteurs du dix-huitième siècle son existence et sa force, à Walter Scott son prestige."

the decreased cost of books, so that the novel became what it has since remained, the best literary means of getting the ear of the great public.

The nineteenth century conditions offered increasingly varied matters concerning which the ear of the public was desired. Politics, as we have seen, were being democratized; religion was being liberalized; science was being organized; and conduct was being moralized—and all these movements, concerning which the revolutionaries were of course the most vociferous, brought forth, also, expressions from those who fought their progress. The novel offered itself to a group of young novelists as the most effective vehicle of propaganda for the spreading of their ideas on religion, government, and conduct. Dickens displayed the injustice and brutality of the workhouse and boarding school, and uncovered the sore spots in metropolitan life. Thackeray took for his special field manners and morals, and showed by means of his narrative the smugness, snobbery, hypocrisy, and even villainy that lay beneath the veneer of society. Prison and factory conditions felt the scourge of Charles Reade's bitter pen; and Kingsley in *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* applied the force of narrative to the solution of political and economic problems.

The novelists whom I have mentioned, with the exception of Thackeray, did not find the historical novel congenial to their aims, for the reason that their interest in political manners, and social conditions, was for the most part not general but confined to contemporary conditions. It may be noted here, however, for what it is worth, that each of these novelists essayed the historical novel and almost without exception produced in that field his best remembered work. *Henry Esmond* is more nearly perfect artistically than any of the other novels of Thackeray, and it is perhaps not too much to say that *Vanity Fair* owes much of its preeminence among his satires to the fact that it was not a novel of contemporary life, much as it may appear so. Certainly *The Cloister and the Hearth* is now the only generally read novel of Reade's; and strange as it seems to me, I find among the common run of readers more liking for *The Tale of Two Cities* than for any other of Dickens' novels. As for Kingsley, his *Hypatia*, though out of our immediate field, is illustrative of the type of historical novel of purpose which will be treated in this chapter.

The real importance of history in discussions of contemporary affairs is that it brings to bear on the subject all the force of tra-

dition and the accumulated weight of years. Economically, socially, and politically, life during the nineteenth century had become so different and so much more complex than it had ever been previously, that tradition could be of small guidance and dependence upon it was little less than tragic stupidity. At one point, however, tradition entered and asserted itself in the nineteenth century battle of ideas. Of all institutions that in which the force of the past is most powerful is the church—the law, too, of course is traditional, but it deals with something outside man; whereas religion is his very soul—and in the nineteenth century the church, too, was beaten from its moorings by the storms of change and development. The growth of liberalism in religion, fostered and spread by Methodism, the increasing problems of the church due to the increasing complexity of social life, the waning power of an institution which sought with outworn and antiquated tools to carve souls out of unfamiliar materials, stirred the church to its very foundations, creating on the one hand, the Social Christians who claimed that the church must adopt new tools for the new task, and on the other the High-Church Anglicans whose answer was, “repolish and resharpen the old tools which carelessness has allowed to become nicked and rusted.” As in all other discussions, the propagandists found the novel a convenient means of expression, and in this case it was the historical novel to which they turned. Kingsley entered the lists with *Hypatia* which transferred the contemporary philosophical battle to ancient Alexandria, and Cardinal Newman tried to state his case in narrative form in the colorless *Callista*. The narrowness and bigotry and futility of a formalized church constitutes the burden of ideas carried by the splendid story of *The Cloister and the Hearth*, though one cannot help feeling that here at least “the plot’s the thing.” Naturally the High-Church Anglicans would seek their justification in the time when their highest development was arrested by the honest, clumsy hand of Cromwell, and to this end, as he saw it, John Henry Shorthouse wrote *John Inglesant*.

Inglesant, I hasten to add, was not so polemical a novel as may have been indicated by the introduction here given it. In many ways it “stands aloof from the historical and religious novels of its time.”² Its author was not a propagandist, not even properly speaking a novelist, but a business man who was intensely inter-

²Oliver Elton: *A Survey of English Literature*, N. Y. 1920, vol. IV, p. 317.

ested in religious philosophy, and who had an overwhelming desire to write a book.³ He wrote several books before he died, but he will always remain a one book man, remembered as the author of *John Inglesant*, the novel into which went all his thoughts and experiences and ideals. In his preface to the new edition of 1881, the author explained both the nature and purpose of the novel.

"The book," he says, "is an attempt at a species of literature which I think has not hitherto had justice done to it, but which I believe to be capable of great things,—I mean Philosophical Romance."⁴ In comparing his novel with "historical romance," which he considers a distinctly different type of novel he explains that "as I believe that all that is wanted to constitute an historical romance of the highest interest is the recovery of the detailed incidents of everyday life, and the awakening of individual need and striving, long since quiet in the grave; so in books where fiction is used to introduce philosophy, I believe that it is not to be expected that human life is to be described simply as such. The characters are, so to speak, sublimated: they are only introduced for a set purpose, and having fulfilled this purpose—were it only to speak a dozen words—they vanish from the stage." While disclaiming eloquently any attempt to "undervalue this wonderful exertion of the imaginative faculty," as he calls Romance, Shorthouse insists that it has been his purpose to keep it subordinate to Philosophy, and that his incidents and characters have been selected "with philosophic intent."

The special philosophical problem which the author set for himself was "Amid the tangled web of a life's story to trace—the conflict between Culture and Fanaticism—the analysis and character of Sin—the subjective influence of the Christian Mythes."⁵ Shorthouse was attracted to this subject by both temperament and reading. Brought up in a Quaker family, he must have been early impressed with the ideas of toleration and the "inner light," which have so important a place in the philosophy of *John Ingle-*

³*The Life and Letters of J. H. Shorthouse*, edited by his wife, Lon. 1905, 2 vols.

"He would often say, half playfully to me, 'I should so like to write a book; if it was only quite a little book which nobody read, I should like to write one.'"

⁴J. H. Shorthouse: *John Inglesant* (first edition, 2 vols., 1881).

The edition here used is that of MacMillan & Co., London, 1906. Preface pp. vii-x.

⁵*Ibid.*

sant. In his reading he was attracted by Hawthorne and Michelet, the former of whom he mentions specifically in his "Preface" as one who has carried the art of introducing philosophy into his works of fiction to the highest perfection.⁶ But it was rather Hawthorne's interest in the character of sin than his artistic method that influenced Shorthouse. Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites strengthened our author's philosophic tendencies, and probably helped to turn his attention to the part. Finally one is hardly surprised to learn that the novel was written slowly between 1866 and 1876 while Shorthouse was living in "Beaufort Road within a stone's throw of Newman." These facts make it clear that the historical character of *John Inglesant* as a novel dealing with the seventeenth century is purely secondary.⁷

The selection of the seventeenth century as the scene of the romance was no doubt determined partly by the fact that Shorthouse "discovered a strong sentimental sympathy for the Anglicanism of the seventeenth century as he conceived it,"⁸ and partly by the opportunity offered by conditions in England during the Civil Wars for treating "the conflict between Culture and Fanaticism." In considering *John Inglesant* as an historical novel it is therefore necessary to bear in mind that the author was not primarily interested in the history of his period or in recreating it in his novel, except as a setting for his philosophy. The actual foundation of the plot had no connection whatever with the seventeenth century. "When he felt that he had collected materials for a work," says his wife, "he said, 'I am quite ready to begin a book, only I want a plot.' By and by he found just what he wanted, the story of a knight who, on returning from a crusade, met and forgave the murderer of his brother. Round this one incident was woven the story of *John Inglesant*."⁹

Shorthouse's own statements concerning the inception of the book are a trifle contradictory in their explanation of the selection of the seventeenth century as his scene. In 1883 he wrote to Mr. Edmund Gosse:

"When, many years ago, I began the book, my principal perhaps my sole object was to endeavor for my own pleasure to

⁶See also *Life*, p. 39 ff. Letter to Margaret Southhall, Aug. 16, 1853.

⁷The facts concerning Shorthouse's life are taken from the article by Thomas Seccombe in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement Two, pp. 309-310.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Life*, vol. 2, p. 76.

realize, if possible, something of that exquisite age-spirit which combined all the finest feelings of our own nature, and all the sympathies of our existence, with a certain picturesqueness of tone and result, which seems to me to mark the seventeenth century. This was my first idea. The philosophy and the story developed itself as I went on, but I should have considered myself amply rewarded if I could have succeeded in catching anything of this spirit. I had to leave out a great deal of detail which, being absolutely *real*, could not fail to have increased this effect.”¹⁰

It would appear from this that *John Inglesant* was originally conceived as an historical novel which was to portray the seventeenth century. It is evident, however, that Shorthouse’s interest in the period was not that of the historian, to show the century as it really was, nor of the realist, to portray the eternal human likenesses beneath changed exteriors, but of the romanticist, to find in the past an ideal which belonged to him by virtue of the period in which he himself lived. This ideal he more clearly expressed in a letter to Mrs. Evans, dated August 28, 1880:

“The book is a protest on behalf of culture of every kind against fanaticism and superstition in every form. It is, in fact, opposed to the popular ideas of religion (or the popular religions of the day); had I sympathized with the popular religions of the day, it would never have been written.”¹¹

And in a slightly earlier letter to the same person he said: “My own reading of the book is that God prefers culture to fanaticism.”¹² Such statements place *John Inglesant* definitely among the expressions of the high-church movement against the growing liberalism of the later nineteenth century.

This conscious and deliberate subordination of history to philosophy was no doubt responsible, at least in great measure, for the standard of historical accuracy maintained by Shorthouse. In considering this aspect of the novel we have here to do with a little less than half of the work; with the remainder, dealing with seventeenth century Italy, Molinos, the election of the Pope, etc., this treatise is not concerned. It cannot be unjust, however, to infer that the English chapters are a measure of the Italian.

John and Eustace Inglesant, twins, are represented as born in 1622 at Westacre, an estate which had come to the family through

¹⁰*Life*, vol. 2, pp. 190–193.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 122.

their great-grandfather, who had been a follower of Thomas Cromwell. In 1629 Eustace was sent to London to be a page at court, while John was kept at home and put under the instruction of a tutor, who was a Platonist and a Rosicrucian and a believer in alchemy and astrology. The Inglesants had always remained Catholic at heart while outwardly conforming to the Anglican Church, and in 1636 John's instruction was taken over by a Jesuit, Father St. Clare. The idea, however, was not that the boy should be brought into the Roman communion, but that he might be brought body and soul under the domination of the Jesuit while yet remaining an Anglican. In this manner John could retain the confidence of both sides and so become a useful tool of those Catholics who were seeking to unite the churches through the party of Laud. In 1638 he was made a page of the Queen and his activities began. These led him to the support of Laud, whom he attended to the scaffold, and later into the army of Charles in the Civil War. His most important service in the war was in connection with the enterprise of Glamorgan in bringing the Irish to the defence of Charles. Inglesant was captured and for stubbornly maintaining the innocence of the King was committed to the Tower. Condemned for treason, he was saved on the scaffold, and after the execution of Charles, was liberated. The murder of Eustace by an Italian threw a shadow over John's life and the motive of revenge led him from England into the maze of Italian politics. At this point the story passes beyond the sphere of our interest. If John Inglesant had been a representative Englishman of his time, it would be worth while to follow him through Italy to discover the spiritual relations between England and Italy in the seventeenth century. But Inglesant was a creature purely of the author's imagination, and one who, as Mr. S. R. Gardiner has said, "never could have existed." "In the days of Charles I, it would have been impossible for anyone to have passed through Inglesant's experience without being challenged to make up his mind on the claims of the two churches."¹³

The motivating element in John's character is just this carefully produced divided sympathy for the Roman and the Anglican churches, this desire to unite the beauty of the Mass with the Anglican theology. The historical situation which made such a

¹³S. R. Gardiner: *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. CV, pp. 599-608.

Whenever Gardiner is referred to in this discussion of *John Inglesant* the reference is to this exhaustive and scholarly review of the novel.

character of importance was, according to Shorthouse, a well-laid and wide-spread plot on the part of the Papists and many Anglicans to win back England to Rome by means of community of belief between the Catholics and the Laudian Anglicans. Shorthouse viewed the Laudians as identical with the Roman sympathizers of the mid-nineteenth century, and for his purpose "overestimated the Roman movement and under-estimated the strength of Anglicanism." "If anything is to be learned (from contemporary evidence) it is the very little part taken in the work of conversion by the sublime considerations which seem so important to Mr. Shorthouse."¹⁴

The reader may charge me with inconsistency in that I have attempted to defend Scott's middle-of-the-road heroes and now attack John Inglesant. There is, however, an essential difference between them. Scott's heroes, Morton, Everard, and Julian Peveril, though temperamentally in the *juste milieu*, espoused each one a definite side in the struggle, maintaining all the time a heroic magnanimity. If they are impossible, it is individually and not historically. Individually they are too magnanimous to be altogether real, but their experiences are those which would have happened historically to men of their character had they existed at the time. Inglesant as a character is neither more nor less possible individually than Scott's heroes, but he is historically impossible because his whole experience is dominated by his studied religious neutrality, whereas it is beyond belief that a man of his importance in public affairs would not have been forced to take sides between the churches. He is individually improbable and historically impossible. Moreover the unreality of Inglesant cannot be excused on the ground that Shorthouse aimed to present a hero, for John is cast in anything but the heroic mold. His actions were governed not by his own principles but by those of Father St. Clare.

This misconception of the general character of the times, which led to the creation of an absurd and impossible hero, had its effect also on all the characters authentic and fictitious in the novel. In the Jesuit Father St. Clare Shorthouse crossed an authentic Franciscan monk, Sancta Clara, with a Jesuit and "produced a

¹⁴Gardiner: "People turned Catholic because they were afraid of being damned." *John Inglesant*, p. 62.

"(The memory of the sacrament at Little Gidding) prevented that craving for the Mass, which doubtless is the strongest of all the motives which lead men to Rome."

monster,"¹⁵ as may be judged from the following speech in which Father St. Clare sounds the keynote to his own character:

"This is the most important lesson that a man can learn—that all men are really alike, that all creeds and opinions are nothing but the mere result of chance and temperament, that no party is on the whole better than any other, that no creed does more than imperfectly shadow forth some one side of truth, and it is only when you begin to see this, that you can feel that pity for mankind, that sympathy with its disappointments and follies, and its natural human hopes, which have such a little time of growth, and such a sure season of decay."¹⁶

This is pure nineteenth century thought and as far from Jesuitical as possible. Shorthouse represents the ideas here expressed as the dominant spirit of the Society of Jesus in the seventeenth century; whereas, on the contrary, history makes no mention of any individual even who held them.¹⁷ Such wide toleration was in fact foreign not only to the Jesuits but also to practically every sect in England at the time. Even the Roman Catholic reviewer of *John Inglesant* had no defense for the characterization of the Jesuits. "We had rather," he says, "condemn the society with Pascal than absolve it with John Inglesant."¹⁸

Shorthouse's own defense of the character of his Jesuit emphasized his subordination of historical truth to philosophical purpose in the novel. In a letter to Dr. Abbott, November, 1880, he wrote:

"The Jesuit is a man of the world, and not a mere tool of his Order. He sacrifices Johnny to his purpose, as he would have sacrificed his own life, but in return he trains his pupil to a broad conception of life and men, which developed, step by step, into a perfect toleration of and indifference to all creeds and opinions, as alike the outcome of a central light, which, to his own satisfaction at least, was sufficient to illuminate the dark puzzles of his life. Whether such a Jesuit is true to nature or not is another question. I have had a very interesting correspondence with a Benedictine

¹⁵Mr. Gardiner notes that the real Sancta Clara was Christopher Davenport, a Franciscan, author of *Deus, Natura, Gratia*. He did point out the similarity of the English and Roman faiths, but the manner was ironical. Far from being a Jesuit, he was attacked by the society.

¹⁶*John Inglesant*, p. 74.

¹⁷Gardiner: "If any Jesuit had come in the reign of Charles I. to leave stray souls to their fate, it would be worth while telling who that Jesuit was."

¹⁸William Barry, D.D.: *Dublin Review*, vol. XC, p. 395.

monk on this point. He condemns Father St. Clare as a monster of atheism and villainy, impossible in the Society of Jesus, but out of that fairyland (I will not say fool's paradise) in which modern Catholics live. I should be sorry to think so poorly of their Church as to suppose all its members mere machines, too, with no intelligent guidance, for, where all are machines, intelligence is not needed. . . . The characters are all introduced with a philosophical purpose, and not as mere representatives of life."¹⁹

Nor has the spirit of the protestants been more accurately presented. One of the most famous and delightful incidents in the book is that which depicts the life of the Ferrars and Collets at Little Gidding; yet it would scarcely meet with the approval of Nicholas Ferrar. To Inglesant's question concerning the claim of the Catholic church, he is made to reply:

"You will suppose there must be some strong reason why I who value so many things among the Papists so much have not joined them myself. I should probably have escaped much violent invective if I had done so. You are very young, and are placed where you can see and judge of both parties. You possess sufficient insight to try the spirits, whether they be of God. Be not hasty to decide, and before you decide to join the Romish communion, make a tour abroad, and, if you can, go to Rome itself."²⁰

This was the same Ferrar who actually said: "I as verily believe the Pope to be antichrist as any article of my faith," and, at another time, that if the mass were celebrated in his house, "I would build down the room and build it up again."²¹

"The figure of the King," says Mr. Gardiner, "is drawn with exceeding skill . . . and bears the impress of truth."²² It must be acknowledged that, though a royalist, Shorthouse deftly displayed the mixture of "amiability" and selfishness in the King's character; but it seems to have escaped Mr. Gardiner, though he points out how Shorthouse slandered the leading Puritans, and especially Cromwell, that by so doing the novelist very subtly idealized Charles. To quote again the review: "Because twenty years ago writers like Forster absurdly exaggerated the virtues of Puritanism, it has become the fashion to ignore everything except its vices. Yet when Mr. Shorthouse tells us that the

¹⁹*Life*, vol. 2, p. 125.

²⁰*John Inglesant*, p. 60.

²¹Gardiner.

²²*Ibid.*

sole motive with the judges who condemned the King to death was self, one cannot but doubt whether he knows anything of the origin of the second civil war, or even of the notorious argument of Lord Macaulay that Cromwell could never willingly have consented to the execution of Charles I, because nothing could have been so injurious to himself. The term 'brewer in Whitehall' applied to the future Lord Protector is all very well from a Royalist pamphleteer in 1649, but it does not raise one's respect for a serious writer in 1882."²³

The passage referred to above affords a good example of the historical tone of the novel:

"The flower of England on either side was beneath the turf or beyond the seas, and the management of affairs was left in the hands of butchers and brewers. Ranting sermons, three in succession, before a brewer in Whitehall, are the medium to which the religious utterance of England is reduced, and Ireton and Harrison in bed together, with Cromwell and others in the room, signed the warrant for the fatal act."²⁴

Such total misrepresentation²⁵ of characters and spirit admits no possible explanation except that Shorthouse was ignorant of the history of his period. Some part, it is true, may be laid to deliberate prejudice, but ignorance is clearly shown by the long list of

²³Concerning the causes of the second civil war as furnishing motive for the execution of Charles, it is worth while to quote from a letter written by the King to a friend, September 18, 1649, from Newport, shortly after he had concluded a treaty with the Parliament: "to deal freely with you, the great concession I made this day—the Church, militia, and Ireland—was made mainly in order to my escape. . . . my only hope is that now they believe I dare deny them nothing, and so be less careful of their guards." Such a King certainly afforded other motives besides the selfishness of his enemies for his execution.

Cf. C. H. Firth: *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England*, p. 208, N. Y. 1907.

²⁴*John Inglesant*, p. 164.

²⁵*Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. "Everymen" Intro. p. xvii.

Speaking of the signing of the death sentence, "It is certain," says Mrs. Hutchinson, "that all men herein were left to their free liberty of acting, neither persuaded nor compelled; and as there were some nominated on the commission who never sat, and others who sat at first but durst not hold on, so all the rest might have declined if they would."

inaccuracies, which have no bearing whatever, either on the conduct of the plot or the tone of the novel.²⁶

What Shorthouse could have done with historical scenes had he possessed the requisite knowledge is sufficiently well shown by the splendid picture of the court at Oxford²⁷ and the spirited scene between Inglesant and Lord Biron in Chester.²⁸ But the novelist's object was not to present a picture of the seventeenth century, but to propound a religious philosophy of the nineteenth by means of a seventeenth century story. For his purpose it was not only not necessary for him to reproduce the period accurately; it was essential that he warp historical facts so that they would fit into his philosophical system.

In matters of construction *John Inglesant* as much as *Lorna Doone* represented the reunion of realism and romance. Widely different, as these two novels are, they bear something of the resemblance which may be noted between the works of Bunyan and those of Defoe. Both owe much of their interest to intimate details,²⁹ but in *Lorna Doone* these details were of a material and external nature; whereas in *John Inglesant* they were spiritual and internal. Though written in the third person, *John Inglesant* was given the effect of a memoir by its introductory chapter in which the author, in the name of Geoffrey Monk, claimed to have produced the story from authentic papers and memoirs in the library at Lydiard. This device had been used by Scott, but neglected by succeeding romancers between him and Blackmore. The styles, too, of *Lorna Doone* and *John Inglesant* are very different, but here again the difference is superficial and the resemblance fundamental. What Blackmore achieved by putting his novel into the language of a seventeenth century Exmoor rustic, Shorthouse

²⁶Among the inaccuracies pointed out by Mr. Gardiner are:

1. That Hampden was tried for refusing to pay ship money and that an English Parliament existed in 1637. p. 45.

2. That there were people called Cavaliers and Roundheads in 1640. p. 74.

3. That there was an attack on Lambeth Place during Stafford's trial. p. 75.

4. That Milton was Secretary and Bradshaw President of the Council of State before the King's death. p. 150.

²⁷*John Inglesant*, chap. IX.

²⁸*Ibid.* chap. XII.

²⁹Cf. Preface to *John Inglesant*, quoted above.

accomplished by successfully suggesting in his style the classical learning, the grace and calm and devotion of a gentleman of the court of Charles I.

It was not the method, therefore, but the purpose which distinguished *John Inglesant* from other historical novels. It was written not to tell a story, nor to teach history, nor to combine these purposes; its object was to set forth a religious philosophy which the author thought obtained in England during the civil wars. It was concerned with thoughts rather than with things, and its emphasis, therefore, was upon character rather than upon situation and incident. The historical element was distinctly subordinate to the individual characters.

As an historical novel, *John Inglesant* suffered from two great defects. It was an intimate and enthralling spiritual biography, but a biography of a purely ideal character. The convincing hero in an historical novel must be a compound of those elements of human nature, which remain unchanged through all ages, and the material and spiritual conditions peculiar to the time of the story. The latter element recalls the past, and the former furnishes the link by which the reader is held in sympathy with the character and enabled to relive history. John Inglesant possessed neither of these; humanly unreal and historically impossible, he was a product of the author's imagination, moulded so as to fit the philosophical purpose of his maker. The unreality of such a character might not have been so apparent had Shorthouse not made Inglesant a man of great importance in national affairs, and linked him closely with well known historical events and personages. The result was to throw into strong relief Inglesant's individual absurdity and the distortion of history caused by the author's preconceived philosophy.

Nevertheless, in spite of its general lack of historical truth, which for one who reads it with a knowledge of the seventeenth century destroys much of the effect of the philosophy, *John Inglesant* remains a great and delightful book. No doubt a large part of its charm is due to its uniqueness; if Shorthouse is a one-book man, that book is also without a double in English fiction. But uniqueness is a doubtful virtue, since without solid value it is mere freakishness like the blank pages of *Tristram Shandy* or the grotesque typography of some modern verse. I have already said that *Inglesant* contains stirring incidents splendidly narrated. There are more of these in the Italian than in the English section

of the book, scenes like those in the mountains and the monastery, or like that of the election of the pope, colored with exquisite description and narrated in a style that makes them pass before our very eyes. Inglesant himself is more real in Italy than in the Civil War in England, and the character of Molinos, because more congenial to the author, more natural than any of the other historical portraits. But what really makes *John Inglesant* live as a novel is that it is a romance, a spiritual romance of adventures of the soul, made out of the stuff of life, built up with the infinite detail of realism that destroys the essential incredibility of the story, and told in a style of extraordinary grace and charm.

In its entirety *John Inglesant* had no followers, nor can one point to any of the succeeding historical novels dealing with the Stuart period and say here is the influence of *Inglesant*. We have seen, however, how without perhaps owing anything directly to *Lorna Doone*, Shorthouse's novel displayed the same sort of union of realism and romance; in the same manner, without showing any definite traces of influence, a whole group of later novels resemble *Inglesant* in that they deal with spiritual rather than with physical incidents. Pure romance, says one critic, is a set of conventions—conventions, which unfortunately for the immortality of romances, are likely to change with succeeding generations. Few there are who are any longer terrified by the clap-trap of Gothic conventions, and even the glorious grotesques of Hugo have lost most of their power. Terror, fear, fascination, curiosity remain, but one by one they have exhausted as sources of satisfaction the supernatural of the Gothic, the vague villainy of Byronism, and the abnormality of Quasimodo and Gwynplaine. These emotions found their satisfaction in the third quarter of the nineteenth century in the novel of adventure of the soul. Some, like Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter* especially, treated universal human emotions and threw them into the past in order to achieve the added interest inherent in the romantic glamour of the old. George Eliot, always busied with the adventures of the soul, found it convenient to place her story of the degeneration of Tito in the Florence of Savonarola. Browning's love of the grotesque in spirit as well as in material led him to search the renaissance, whose crowded life was filled with complex, contradictory characters, for materials which in their way are as much the stuff of romance as are desert islands and accidental situations in theirs. In such novels immediate purpose other than entertainment is likely to

disappear. True the moral purpose frequently remains, but nothing, on the whole, is more difficult than to estimate the amount and importance of moral purpose in the greater part of fiction. The novels which I have here classed with *Inglesant* were so placed not because they were also novels of purpose, but because they were, like *Inglesant*, psychological novels.

In 1886 was published a small novel,³⁰ which, to tell the truth, must feel uncomfortably insignificant along side of *John Inglesant*. There, however, *Dagonet the Jester* belongs since it resembles its illustrious predecessor in that it was concerned mainly with matters of thought and spirit. No well known historical characters or events appear or are alluded to in this little story, which concerns itself only with obscure people in a tiny village, in whose lives, despite their obscurity, is shown the whole spiritual transformation which took place between Caroline and Puritan England.

The story is told by Aaron Blenkinsop, son of the blacksmith of Thorn Abbey. Under the patronage of a nearby lord Aaron had been enabled to leave the village and study on the continent, with the result that when he came to write his story he was able to view England almost as an outsider. The hero, however, of the novel is not Aaron but Dagonet the Jester, who at the beginning of the story had just been expelled from the castle for an ill-timed jest at the expense of her ladyship. He fled to the blacksmith's and presently took up the trade of cobbling in Thorn Abbey. The Puritanic seriousness was just taking hold of the people, so that they looked askance at so frivolous a person as the jester, who found sympathy and understanding only in Aaron's mother and Nancy, daughter of an old precisian. Nancy's inner life was a continual struggle between the buoyancy of youth and her precisian conscience, and one day when the young lord in gay trappings stopped in the village and made advances to Nancy, she let herself for a moment be attracted by his worldly glory. Hers was only a momentary sin of thought, but she fled in terror to the smithy, where she was rescued from the hypocritical smith, successor to Blenkinsop, and comforted by Dagonet. They were married. Their life would have been happy, but Nancy's strict conscience held ever before her her worldly weakness until her gloom drove

³⁰Malcolm MacMillan: *Dagonet the Jester*, Lon. 1886.

The book is listed by E. A. Baker in *Guide to Best Historical Fiction*, but beyond the short account given there I can find no mention of it or the author.

Dagonet often from the house. The Puritan villagers, always ready to believe the worst of the jester, attributed Nancy's weeping to his cruelty, and spread all manner of evil report about him. After years abroad Aaron returned to find the cobbler without trade and defamed on every hand. Yet within Dagonet's home all was love, saddened, however, by Nancy's gloom, which her husband could not understand. They spent a pleasant evening together, Aaron, Nancy and Dagonet, and their little son, after which Dagonet went out, as he said, for a walk. Though he knew that his Puritan neighbors had treated him unjustly, he had no word of censure for them except to say: "I have warned all that come after me to beware of putting on ass's ears on pain of recovering never their human shape."³¹ Nancy in her husband's absence, confessed her sin to Aaron and in the first flush of his absolution they set out to find Dagonet. In the cave he used to haunt they found only the charred remains of his jester's habit, but the next day Dagonet himself was found frozen to death on the grave of Aaron's Puritanic father. Nancy and her son lived on, cheered by the friendship of Aaron and the memory of Dagonet whose "shrewd rustic mirth, inspiring the sober gravity of the girl-Puritan he had married, woke in her the atoning persuasion that for many wounds of the soul a brave cheerfulness is better than the waters of affliction."³²

All this is told in 179 pages of rambling narratives and comment reminiscent of the style of *Tristram Shandy*. Quaint details, though not numerous, pedantic allusions, loose involved sentences, and archaic constructions add to the narrative an intimacy and a flavor of old times, that go far towards producing the very real pathos of the tale.

But though the tragic story of Dagonet is unquestionably moving, the real motive of the author was to depict the changing spirit of the times. He accomplished his purpose not by constructing any artificial mannikin like John Inglesant but by, a bit too obviously, using individuals as symbols of ideals. In Dagonet, himself, is personified "merrie England," the remnant of the freedom and good fellowship of the Elizabethans. Nancy, of course, is the Puritan conscience incarnate with its excessively keen sense of sin. Neither of these could understand each other, but Aaron Blenkinsop, who had been abroad during most of the

³¹*Dagonet the Jester*, p. 164.

³²*Ibid.* p. 179.

struggle and had viewed the strife in England from the detached position of a half-foreign scholar, has this to say of the situation. He has just listened to Nancy's confession:

"In that ghostly pallor it seemed to me that a twilight of the spirit had indeed fallen on England. The conscience-stricken, plaining woman at my side was a type of the new woman, in whom the sense of sin was to be the predominant feature. Yet I—even I—the hater of precisian scruples, could not but feel it to be natural. For on the other side there rose in my mind an image of my Lord, and what he was growing to be. How had youth and meriment and accomplishment and daring faded away from him, leaving only the hardened and sneering pursuer of pleasure and advancement! To me indeed he showed still, as I have said, both steadfastness and kindness. But what a world was that in which he moved! Innocence to him was a helpless ignorance, which it behooved him to enlighten and strengthen. What a brilliant and destructive glory awaited those twin children of wisdom, the harlot and the thief—not those blithe denizens of the Beggar's Bush, the stage offspring of Master John Fletcher, creatures who retained yet a human heart—but those greater, diviner and more august, the harlot of the Christian Court and the thief of the Sacred College! Already astir in all lands was the demon of vice in our later comedy. And the quieter souls meanwhile sat horror-struck in the gorgon glitter of a superstitious and self tormenting creed. I mourned, as I might the departing sun, that lettered and gracious king, who, whatever his errors, had been a true head to that Church which Christ, through Augustine, had set as it were on the cliffs of Kent. Who would walk by the starlight of schism, when he had but to wait for the sunlight of Royalty and Religion? A schismatic, however was our only guide at present."³³

Later over the ashes of the jester's costume Aaron gives voice to what must have been the inarticulate lament of much of England:

"I, for my part, felt as if here indeed were the graves of all that was glad and happy and ripe, of all that had sweetness and sap and soundness in this English life of ours."³⁴

And the symbolism is complete when Dagonet is found frozen to death on the grave of the Puritan blacksmith.

³³*Dagonet the Jester*, p. 154-6.

³⁴*Ibid.* p. 161.

Dagonet the Jester is a symbolistic miniature, a difficult combination. The chief virtue of the miniature, minuteness of detail, it does not possess in any great degree. That is an element of realism difficult of combination with symbolism, which requires that characters be exaggeratedly consistent. The symbolic character must inevitably be more of an incarnate idea than a human individual. Nevertheless the characters of *Dagonet* possess considerable human interest; but unfortunately we do not see very much of them. The novel is scarcely longer than many short-stories, and because of its rambling style and frequent digressions it lacks the compactness necessary to character development in so short a tale. It gives, however, from a Royalist point of view, an impressive picture of the conflict of ideas in Puritan England, and it was the first historical novel concerning that period to be written entirely without reference to great history.

The spiritual conflict of *Dagonet the Jester* belonged particularly to the period in which the story was placed. In *The Spanish Poniard*,³⁵ however, appeared a further development of the use of the Civil Wars in what may be termed the psychological historical novel.

The story begins near the great oak in Warwickshire, supposed to mark the center of England. Under this oak, shortly before the opening of the civil war, Captain Gamage discovered a Spanish woman with a four year old boy. A few days later the boy was brought, an orphan, to Captain Gamage. The body of the woman was dragged from the river, and a Spanish poniard of unusual design, which had been noticed by Gamage at their first meeting, was picked up in the grave yard. The father of the boy remained

³⁵Thomas A. Pinkerton: *The Spanish Poniard, being the story of The Remorse of Ambrose Drybridge.*

The edition here used was published in London by Swan, Sonnenschein and Company, Ltd., and is undated. Mr. Baker gives the date as 1890, *History in Fiction (English)*, p. 40, Lon. Routledge. The novel is here listed under The Reign of Elizabeth. No date is attached to the setting of the story but between a novel dealing with the year 1596 and one dealing with 1601, with the following comment.

"Scene: rural Warwickshire at the close of the Elizabethan age and the dawn of Puritanism; strong in local coloring. The adventuress who followed Drake to the Spanish Main, and the fanatics who nourished their violent instincts on dreams of divine wrath and their own providential selection, well represented."

The error in this classification will, I am sure, be made plain in this discussion.

unknown, and because of his foreign look Gamage gave him the name of Leon. Among the friends of Gamage were Ambrose Drybridge, a meditative, charitable old man, who had gradually become blind, and Saul Iresdon, a bully later converted to Puritanism, upon whom rested for a while the suspicion of the fatherhood of Leon. Leon, having grown into a handsome youth, was sent away to learn the art of soldiering, and returned in time to fight with Iresdon when the latter's fanaticism had led him to overthrow the cross in the town square. Though Leon fell in love with Rose, daughter of Ambrose, there was over him a dark mood, induced apparently by faint memories connected with the strange poniard and the idea that he was to revenge his mother on some unknown man. Having learned during his travels of a famous Italian doctor, then in London, who could cure blindness, Leon through Rose succeeded in inducing Ambrose to submit to an operation. To the mystification of his friends, Ambrose, though he was a man of great piety, had always seemed to consider his affliction as the just punishment of God for his sins. Upon the recovery of his sight Ambrose immediately recognized Leon as his son, and was confronted with the terrible alternative of condemning himself or of seeing his legitimate daughter married to his illegitimate son. At this point the Civil War entered Warwickshire, and Ambrose, having written his confession, managed conveniently to get himself killed at Edgehill in defense of the king. Leon read the confession and, feeling that his vengeance had been enacted by God, left England without a word to Rose.

The story, of course, immediately suggests *The Scarlet Letter*, though *The Spanish Poniard* is even less historical. Both are stories of individual sin, placed in an historical setting; but whereas in *The Scarlet Letter* the temper and conscience of the times is in the main responsible for the persecution of Hester, in *The Spanish Poniard* neither the physical nor spiritual conditions of Civil War England have anything to do with the motivation of the action. The novel might just as easily and effectively have been set in any other period. It is a story of individual remorse and retribution for sin, unaffected by the historical situation. The battle of Edgehill, the single actual historical incident alluded to in the story, serves only to facilitate the solution as any other catastrophe, battle, storm, or shipwreck, might have done as readily.

Saul Iresdon and the fanatical preacher who converted him are the only two characters in the story peculiar to the period in

which it is placed, and so far as their influence on the main action of the novel is concerned, they might as well not be there. Powerful as is the portrayal of these fanatics, they must be viewed in the light of ornaments, like the local color, the costumes, and the manners. As representatives of the Puritans they afford an obviously unfair, because incomplete, picture.

As the romancers who followed Scott had used historical settings as the vehicle for pure action romances unrelated to any period, so towards the end of the century the same old means had come to be used to lend color and credence to the psychological romance.

The general tendency of the psychological romance to subordinate history, both events and setting, to individual character was especially pronounced in Hall Caine's *The Shadow of a Crime* (1885). Mr. Baker lists the novel along with those dealing with Commonwealth times, although the author distinctly placed it in the Restoration.³⁶ The matter, however, is hardly of even trifling importance since the actual history of the background means almost nothing to the story. It is, says the author, "not in any sense historical. Sketchy background of stirring history is introduced solely in order to heighten the personal danger of a brave man. . . . A word as to the background of history. I shall look for the sympathy of the artist and the forgiveness of the historian in making two or three trifling legal anachronisms that do not interfere with the interest of the narrative. The year of the narrative is given, but the aim has been to reflect in these pages the black cloud of the whole period of the Restoration as it hung over England's remotest solitudes."³⁷

The black cloud of the whole period of the Restoration existed, of course, only in the mind of the author, and would have hung as certainly over the heads of the people of his novel in any period of modern history. It is a story of deep shadows cast by the lurid glare of elemental passions; murder and love, suspicion, superstition, and the power of convention are the springs of action in this drama of the clash between the integrity of the individual and the large injustice of society. Ralph Ray, a dalesman, finding that a suspicion of murder cast by his neighbors upon his father, now dead, threatens to ruin his family, confesses

³⁶E. A. Baker; *History in Fiction (England)* p. 56.

³⁷*The Shadow of a Crime*, preface.

to the crime of which he is innocent. As he stands upon the scaffold in Carlisle, on the very brink of eternity, he is saved by the confession of the real murderer. Many such coincidences produce scenes of intense emotional thrill, which is heightened by the dark and lonely country in which the action takes place.

It is, however, rather the quality of remoteness than the historical character, by virtue of which the background "heightens the personal danger of a brave man." There is a picture of seventeenth century Lancaster in chapter 27; a slight sketch of the Quakers runs throughout the book; and the trial is conducted and the actual catastrophe averted by application of a principle of old jurisprudence, the anachronism referred to by the author. The interest, however, is always in the characters as individuals, quite apart from the historical conditions surrounding them. It was not because they were people of the seventeenth century that the community shunned the family of a reputed murderer; nor did the struggle in the minds of Ralph Ray and Robbie Anderson, the repentant drunkard who really committed the crime, arise from any situation or philosophy characteristic of the Restoration.

In as much as the emphasis of *The Shadow of a Crime* is thrown on the spiritual action of the characters it suggests *The Scarlet Letter* with murder in the place of adultery; but the more evident characteristics such as a florid style, highly emotional situation, and the persistent fitting of the physical setting to the tone of the emotion, avow much more loudly the mastership of Hugo.

The psychological novel was a part of the general broadening of the scope of the novel, a development resulting from the achievement by the novel of a serious purpose. In accordance with nineteenth century thought the individual character was the center of interest, and the place of history was subordinated to the position of a romantic setting. The natural result was novels which turned upon mental status rather than physical situations, and which might in almost all cases have been placed with equal ease in any of a dozen other historical periods. That the Stuart period was chosen was due probably to the fact that it was a period of violent contrasts and strong emotions. *Dagonet the Jester*, alone among the novels of this sort, seems to have aimed to reproduce the peculiar mental conflict of its period for its own sake.

VITA

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